

MediaTitle	The Sun		
Date	16 Jan 2013	Language	English
Circulation	270,506	Readership	171,000
Section	National	Color	Black/white
Page No	6	ArticleSize	81 cm ²
AdValue	RM 893	PR Value	RM 2,680



Forum speaker criticised for belittling student

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PETALING JAYA: Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah criticised a forum speaker for speaking in a “condescending” way and preventing a university student from expressing her views.

He said university students should continue to engage in open debates and not be discouraged by the incident in Universiti Utara Malaysia on Dec 8, 2012.

A 20-minute video of student K. S. Bawani

being apparently insulted by the speaker during a forum went viral. It sparked an uproar in the social networks, drawing public criticisms.

The incident during a postgraduate forum on students and politics saw the speaker, Suara Wanita i Malaysia president Sharifah Zohra Jabeen, stopping Bawani from stating her views.

“Students should not be discouraged by this incident. Instead, this should be a catalyst for more open debates and dialogues,” Saifuddin

told *theSun* yesterday.

“This should serve as a lesson to prospective speakers at universities and student programmes that they must respect students and the least they can do is not belittle the students.”

He tweeted his views on Monday after the video went viral and said he had personally spoken to Bawani and that “she is in high spirits”.